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CAPT. MARVEL ADVENTURES .

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CAPT MARVEL





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THE HOLLOW WORLD

THE radio message from Headquarters of the Space Patrol came through tersely. "Attention, Lieutenant Jon Jarlt An exploration expedition went to Asteroid X-777 a week ago, and has not been heard from since. Find them?"

But first of all, as Jon Jarl rocketed in his space ship to the Asteroid Belt, he had trouble finding the right one. There were over fifty thousand tiny asteroids in all directions! But consulting his space charts, Jon finally loceted X-777 and set his ship that way.

It seemed to be an utterly barren little world as jan approached it. Its surface was all story, with not a blade of grass growing, more than a huge rock floating in space. Since there were no ires nor any objects of concediment, it should be easy to find the lost into jore anticok keeping black but world' the more than jore microk keeping black with the more than a few hours at high rocket speed.

But when he had fmitbed, Jon had found no agen of he missing expedition. "How could I mits them?" Jon muttered, puzzled. "If hey landed or even crashed anywhere. I'd see the ship from miles away. What happened to them? There are no monsters of any kind who could have killed them. Where in the world is that missing ship and the explorers?

Mystified, Jon finally landed on the asteroid to scout around for clues, it any. Had they left a trail or anything Endless reaches of stony ground stretched in all directions. There was nothing in sight. No trail, no clues, nothing. A thor a dozen such landings here and there on Asteroid X-777, Jon was ready to give 100.

"I've gone over the asteroid with a finetooth comb," he shrugged. "That ship just ian't here. I don't think it landed here at all. It's impossible. The leaving."

Jon trudged back toward his own parked ship. Suddenly, the rock gave way beneath him. It seemed to break under his wright as if it were only a thin shell. And Jon plunged down beloestly, into gloonw deths.

Was it a pit? As Jon kept falling without reaching any bottom, for long seconds, his spine cbilled. How deep was this pit? Mites, and miles perhaps? Jon kept falling falling? He gave up hope. Soomer or later he'd hit bottom-and be smalled to a pulp. It was the end. Nothing could save him from this terrible drop into a vast pit At least death would come swiftly, when he hit bottom

But Jon never hit any bottom. Minutes later, in amazement, he noticed that his speed of fall was slowing up! What fantastic thing was this? Slower and slower he went and finally his fall stopped altogether, and Jon was fosting? Floating in thin air?

Gasping, wondering if this were all a bud dream, Jon floated and tried to look around. Gredually his eyes became used to the surrounding gloom. What he saw stretching vaguey in all directions seemed utterly impossible. It was nothing more than empty air!

"Sizzling comets!" Jon eried in sudden realization. "No wonder I didn't hit any bottom. There wasn't even any pit to speak of. This whole asteroid is hollow."

That was the amazing revelation. And, or corress, in a bollow world three could be no strong guil of gravity once you were within strong guid was now for the strong strong strong and was now for density. Evidently the whole asceroid cominet of this guint hollow space, and the strong strong strong strong strong and the strong strong strong strong strong and the strong str

And now Jon saw what had happened to the lost expedition. They and their ship, too, had cracked through a "thin spot" up on the surface, and had fallen down into the hollow. Were they down here somewhere, floating? Were they alive?

Jon found that by bening his arms like a windfull and kicking his logs like a frog. be the air in which be foated After an hour of painful progress, he made out a dim mass shed. It was rocky ground again, as on the surface, but this was the inner side of the hellow shell of the asteroid?

Jon reached the "ground" and now its gravtiv pull held him down. He found he could stand and walk, without floating away. He didn't relish the bird-like floating husages at all. The gloom was not so deep now. Jon could see quite wall. There was enough radioactivity in the rocky surface he walked oo to spread a glow.

Jon walked on, enjoying the strange sensation of wolking along on the inner surface of a hollow world. He was actually walking Upside down, in relation to the outside world. He was like a fly walking across a curving downward before his eyes, it curved upward' It was all crazy, being inside a hollow world.

Jon suddenly saw figures ahead, and broke into a run. The missing explorers, six of them, They were alive? They iurned in surprise as Jon ran up, yelling in greeting. After Jon had explained his presence, they shook their heads sadly.

"Too bad you came after us, Lieutenant," the leader spoke up. "Now you're lost in the hollow asieroid, too, without hope of escape!"

Loss? Jon echeed. What do yee mean? All we have is do is return to the surface.² Wes, but how? came the yrm answer. Our line full down shrough a shing year in the resk. After we resourced from surprise and realized have not support, we used the mesters and lander the inner surface, here. But where here surprise and the surface of the surface been surprised a week, and we are found that thin year we fell intempt. And have came we have where year?

Jon started to look around and then realized he had no idea at all where he had failen through in the gloom and utter sameness of this hollow world, it was impossible to know which was you were walking.

Jon went cold. "So that's it." he muttered. "Failing down into the holicew world was easy enough, but finding year way our magain is another matter. The surface world is probably no more than a mile or two away-maragible through the shell of rock-but it's as fa away as the moon, unless we find a thin you again" We're trapped inside the holios world."

The explorers nodded "The thin spots must be very rare. The inner surface of this hollow asteroid is many hundreds of square miles in area. It's like looking for a needle in a havitat's It's almost hopeiess!"

Jon straightened up. "We'll find a way out, if we search long enough Get some metal bars from your ship. We'll search and keep tapping the ground. The thinner the rock, the more hollow the sound will be. That way we can eventually trace down a thin spot."

But three days later. Jon himself was almost ready to give up. They had gone miles in all directions, tapping the rock under them, hoping for a thin spot All they heard was the dull thud of solid rock miles thick Food was running short about the explorer's ship. too. If they did not find a way or of the hollow world in a few days, they faced starvation"

Suddenly, Jon's tapping produced a hollow sound under them. It's a thin spot?" Jon yelled "Bring picks and hammers from the abro. We'll smash it open."

They eagerly went to work with the picks, trying to small through. Freedom lay perhaps only inches away? But hours later, after much laber, Jon real?red the irrth. "This is a "han spot all right—but not thin resuch. That is, the rock here is 'thin' compared to the rest of the rocky shell, but it's still perhaps thirty leve thick "That hard rock would take us days or werks to chip through. So mera and wert to fat?"

"And we'll starve before we finish,' groaned one explorer "We're still trapped inside this horrible hollow world?"

"There's one hope." Jon said grimly. "Into your ship, all of you."

Soon, Jon himself was at the controls "Brace youtselves, men," he warned "This will be rough!"

Using the rockets skillfully, Jon backed the ship away from the rocky shell and then spurted forward at top speed. "What are you doing, you crazy fool?" one explorer screeched "You're going to amash us against the rock. We'll all be kelled"

"Berter that than slow starvation," Jon said The next moment the pointed nois of the ship airuck the rock with a deafening crash But the ship did not crack up-ii kept going

Jon grinned. "I had to take the charte that tipe shup's steel nose wouldn't cave in 1 figured we had enough power to crack through the thin spot to the surface. Luckily, it worked Take a look at the stars again, men

"Glorious?" murmured one man "It's just. like leaving prison, or a dungeon?"

ON moded. "That hollow asteroid is a deady trap, once you fall inside. When I give my report, it will be destroyed by the Space Patrol. One good proton bomh will track it open like an egythell and scatter it in a thousand pieces. There won't be any mote Asteroid X-377 on the space charts."

THE END

JON JARL of the Space Patrol appears in each issue of CAPTAIN MARVEL AD-VENTURES!



CAPT. MARVEL WHO KNOWS 3 WORTH A WE TRY! IF 1 JUST OR TWO FLL HOLY SMOKE! THIS IS TERRIFIC ! I'LL KEEP WHEN ANY RADIOACTIVE THAT AFTERNOON MINERALS ARE LINDERHEATH HEY! THERE IT GOES LATER, AS BALLY GIVES THE NEWS AT STATION WHILE IVE JUST STRUCK DULL TODAY/ WISH IT RICH REAL EXCITING

CAPT, MARVEL HOLY MOLEY! I'LL NOW I HAVE TO HIRE & JEEP GREAT NEWS BERT! FOR A LOAD OF OR BUT JUST WHERE DID FOLKS! URANIUM YOU STRIKE THE ORE? DAYS! AS YOU ALL ORE! THAT CARL HURST BERT' WELL SECRET! STATION WHIZ AND ONE SIDE















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